

**CITY OF ATASCADERO**

**General Plan Update Program**

**CIRCULATION ELEMENT**

*prepared for*

**City of Atascadero**

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### III. CIRCULATION ELEMENT

Atascadero's circulation system was originally laid out as part of the 1913 Atascadero Colony plan. It was designed for low density land use patterns and for automobile usage, although not necessarily today's higher levels of automobile ownership. A complete system of streets was planned at the time, but not all of the planned streets have been constructed. The circulation network is in the form of radial routes emanating from the central area near City Hall, supported by circumferential routes in a series of rings; the hierarchical grid system common to many cities is not present except for a few blocks in the city center. The classic radial street pattern was interrupted in 1954 with construction of US 101 freeway, and commercial development has spread from the city center along El Camino Real in a linear fashion.

This historical background shapes transportation planning in the City today. With much of the network already established, the key question is how to best use these streets to meet current and future needs, while reflecting higher levels of auto ownership than originally conceived as well as contemporary issues such as air quality. In particular, few streets within Atascadero are designed to carry high volumes of traffic; freeway interchanges are existing and potential future traffic bottlenecks; many roadways are not wide enough to safely accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians; and the street patterns and topography constrain transit operations and access.

This Circulation Element describes how the City of Atascadero plans to provide for the transportation of people and goods to, from and within the City. The element includes a structured network of streets and highways to serve the future City as envisioned in the Land Use Element safely and efficiently. The plan recognizes that the private automobile will continue to be the most frequently used means of transportation in the foreseeable future. However, it also includes policies and programs to reduce the amount of auto travel by promoting use of alternative modes of travel. It also reflects the importance of neighborhood quality and bicyclist and pedestrian safety.

State law requires that a Circulation Element include "the general location and extent of existing and proposed major thoroughfares, transportation routes, terminals and other local public utilities and facilities, all correlated with the Land Use Element of the Plan" (Gov. Code, Sect. 65302(b)). Public utilities and facilities are addressed in Section 5 of the Land Use Element of the General Plan.

In accordance with the State law, the Circulation Element is designed to support the Land Use Element of the General Plan. In particular, the Land Use Element describes the City's character and size and, in effect, establishes the potential levels of activity in the City. The Circulation Element accommodates the level, nature and locations of trip-making that are projected to result from these future activities. The Land Use Element, in turn, is shaped in part by the location and capacity of transportation facilities.

The policies and programs in this Circulation Element have been significantly revised from those included in the previous (1980) General Plan. These revisions have been necessary for consistency with the updated Land Use Element, to reflect current community desires for





transportation, and to conform with emerging air quality and Congestion Management Program policies for the region.

#### A. TRANSPORTATION GOALS

A goal is a general statement about the "ultimate end" toward which efforts are directed. As such, the goals listed below express the community's desires for transportation within the City of Atascadero. Specific policies and programs to support these goals are listed later in this Element.

Four specific transportation goals guide the Circulation Element, as follows:

- 1. Provide for a balanced, safe and efficient circulation system to serve all segments of the community, while continuing to preserve the rural character.*
- 2. Provide and promote alternative modes of travel, particularly for commute trips.*
- 3. Provide adequate regional facilities to minimize thru-traffic intrusion on local streets and to avoid barriers to local traffic.*
- 4. Enhance access to and travel within the downtown area of Atascadero.*

There are several goals in the Land Use Element of the General Plan that also relate to transportation:

- Preserve residential neighborhoods and respect the winding tree-lined nature of the street and road system.*
- Provide for a comprehensive system of routes-to-schools and parks which may include creekside trails.*
- Provide for walkways, horse trails, and bikeways without curbs and sidewalks in some rural areas.*
- Transform the existing El Camino Real "strip" into distinctive, attractive and efficient commercial, office and industrial park areas which can provide for the long-term economic viability of the community.*

The Circulation Element has been designed to help meet the stated goals.





## B. BACKGROUND

In developing policies and programs for the Circulation Element, a comprehensive analysis of existing and potential future transportation conditions was completed for the City of Atascadero Planning Area. This analysis included a review of existing transportation services, surveys of existing traffic volumes and travel patterns, forecasting of future traffic volumes using a computer model, and an assessment of existing and potential future transportation improvement needs and opportunities. The studies are documented in detail in the Technical Appendix. Additionally, concurrent with the circulation analysis, a city-wide traffic safety study evaluated the existing need for traffic safety and operational improvements (*Atascadero Traffic Safety Study*, DKS Associates, 1992). The information from those background studies is summarized below.

### 1. EXISTING TRANSPORTATION CONDITIONS

The circulation network originally planned in 1913 is arranged in the form of a wheel, with the hub being the central business district and spokes being principal arterials such as El Camino Real, Traffic Way and Santa Lucia Road. Supporting these are circumferential routes such as Curbaril Avenue and Portola Road that are designed to serve traffic not destined for the downtown. Finally, minor streets were planned to provide access to individual properties, following the terrain and geographical constraints of the community. Not all of the planned network has been constructed, with some planned streets remaining as "paper streets." Also, many of the minor streets have been privately maintained since their original construction and are not part of the City's adopted circulation system.

The classic street pattern of Atascadero was interrupted in 1954 with construction of the US 101 freeway bisecting the City along a northwesterly-southeasterly line. Presence of the freeway has introduced further discontinuities in the circulation network and limits east-west travel to the eight existing freeway crossing locations. Most notably, the freeway cuts off access from Atascadero Mall to El Camino Real and the city center. Since construction of the freeway, commercial development has tended to occur linearly along the freeway and El Camino Real, with concentrations of activity near freeway interchanges.

#### a. Traffic Volumes

In general, the original planned roadway system continues to accommodate community traffic well, even with the discontinuities due to "paper" and privately maintained streets and the presence of the freeway. Figure III-1 shows daily traffic volumes at various locations throughout Atascadero.









Traffic volumes on most roads are less than 4,000 vehicles per day (total of both directions), which is well within the typical capacity of a two-lane street. A notable exception to this is El Camino Real, which carries about 20,000 daily vehicles on four lanes in the central part of the City. Other exceptions are Morro Road (State Route 41) which carries over 9,000 daily vehicles and Curbaril Avenue which carries up to 7,000 daily vehicles. Traffic volumes are higher than desirable on Curbaril Avenue considering the residential use of the street.

b. Traffic Level of Service

The quality of traffic flow, or "level of service" is measured by comparing the roadway traffic volume to its capacity. (See Table III-2 on page III-20.) Intersections usually determine the quality of traffic flow in an urban area. Existing levels of service for the P.M. peak hour of travel were measured for 29 intersections in Atascadero, six of which are currently signalized.

At most of the signalized locations studied, existing levels of service are fair to good; the worst signalized intersection is El Camino Real/Curbaril, which is approaching unacceptable conditions. A number of unsignalized intersections studied have poor levels of service on individual intersection approach legs where the stop-sign controlled traffic has difficulty turning left onto the major street. This is a particular concern at some of the freeway ramp intersections where high volumes of cross-street traffic make it difficult to turn left onto or off the ramps.

c. Traffic Safety

The *City of Atascadero Traffic Safety Study* evaluated existing traffic control signs and street signs, pavement markings, and high accident locations. Remedial actions were recommended for the identified deficiencies.

- It was found that most traffic signs comply with federal and State requirements. Even so, installation or replacement of close to 300 signs was recommended. Most recommendations involve STOP signs. Recommendations were also made for conducting speed studies and establishment of an ongoing signing maintenance program.
- Pavement markings are currently in good condition and comply with federal and State specifications. The most critical marking deficiency is lack of no-passing zones in the rural areas of the City. Recommendations included further standardization of pavement markings and review of sight-distance and no-passing zones in some areas.
- The City's existing program for identifying and analyzing high accident locations was reviewed, and studies were conducted of high accident





locations in the City. Establishment of an ongoing accident review/safety analysis program was recommended.

- Low cost improvements were recommended for safety and improved traffic flow at 11 locations, while higher cost improvements were recommended at another four locations (in conjunction with longer range circulation improvements).

Details of the traffic safety analysis are contained in the Final Report of the study.

d. Public Transit Service

Two types of public transit service are currently operated in Atascadero. Atascadero Dial-a-Ride provides door-to-door, demand-responsive service to all areas within the City limits. Central Coast Area Transit (CCAT) operates a fixed bus route between Paso Robles and San Luis Obispo via Atascadero, with four southbound trips in the morning and four northbound trips in the evening.

e. Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

There are no designated bicycle routes in Atascadero at present. Sidewalks are generally limited to fully developed portions of El Camino Real, other commercial streets in the central area of Atascadero and, in some cases such as Santa Ysabel, higher density residential areas. In the rural areas of Atascadero, bicyclists, pedestrians and equestrians use the paved roadway or the unpaved shoulders.

f. Commute Travel Patterns

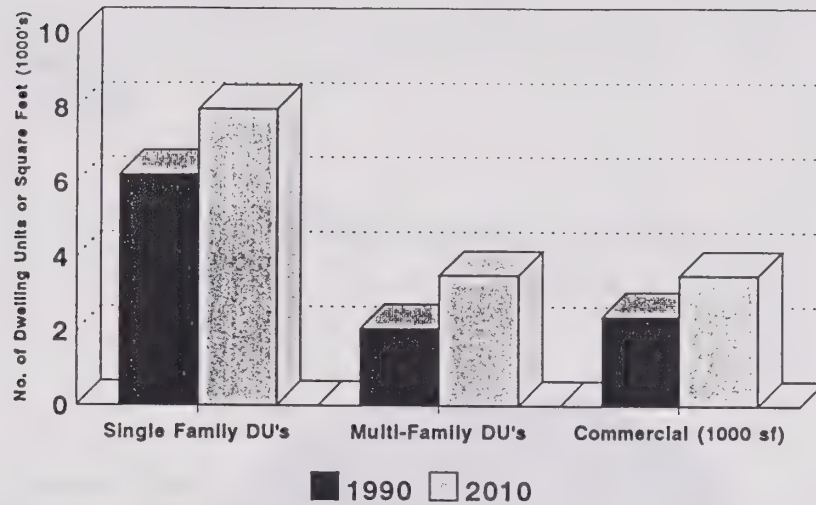
The need for transportation is heavily influenced by peak period commuter travel. Existing commuter travel in Atascadero is primarily by the private automobile. According to the 1990 census, 75 percent of all commuters drive alone to work, while another 16 percent share rides (see chart on following page).

The 1990 census indicates that almost half of Atascadero employed residents (47 percent) work within the City. Although 1990 census data on specific commute destinations are not yet available, the 1980 census reported that 48 percent of the Atascadero out-commuters go to San Luis Obispo, 34 percent to Paso Robles and the remaining 8 percent to other areas. Judging from growth trends in the county, a higher percentage of Atascadero residents commute to Paso Robles now than in the past.





## Projected Growth City of Atascadero



Source: Residential based on General Plan Update, Phase I report (revised 1990); Commercial estimated by City of Atascadero, Crawford Multari & Starr and DKS Associates.

## 2. FUTURE TRANSPORTATION CONDITIONS

To guide development of this Circulation Element, future land use patterns and intensities of the Land Use Element at buildout (assumed to be reached by 2010 or earlier) were translated into traffic forecasts. The process, results and evaluation of alternatives are described in detail in the Circulation Element Technical Appendix. A summary is provided below.

### a. Methodology

To translate future land uses into projections of traffic, a computerized traffic forecasting method was used. This process estimates traffic generation of new developments and then adds projected traffic increases to existing traffic volumes. The projected future traffic volumes were then used to evaluate future levels of service at key intersections and to identify the need for transportation improvements.

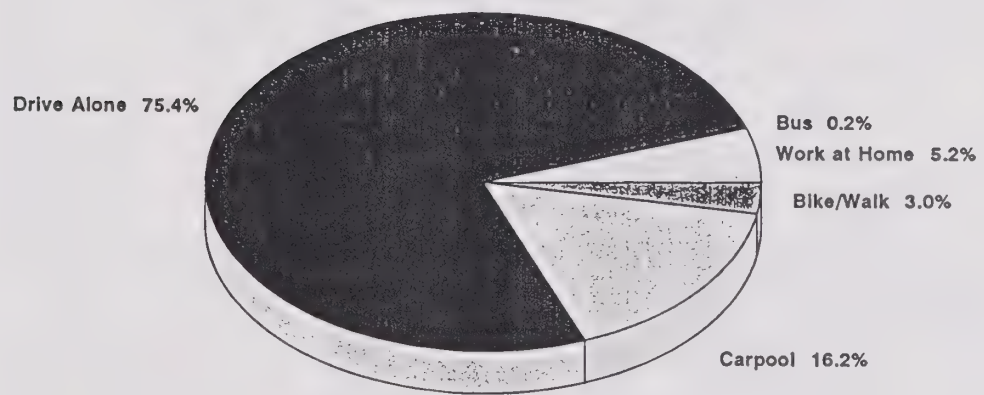
### b. Land Use Inputs

Potential sources of new traffic in the Atascadero Planning Area include about 3,200 new dwelling units. The traffic analysis also assumes an additional 1.1 million square feet of new commercial development (including retail, services, offices and industrial) by 2010. (This is only half the amount of commercial development that could potentially be accommodated by the General Plan; however, further commercial growth beyond 1.1 million square feet could not readily be supported by the buildout population level.)



The chart below shows the projected growth in relation to existing conditions. In the future, Atascadero is assumed to remain a net "exporter" of workers to jobs elsewhere, but perhaps with a slightly greater percentage of destinations in Paso Robles and smaller percentage in San Luis Obispo than at present.

### 1990 Mode to Work City of Atascadero



c. Future Traffic Volumes

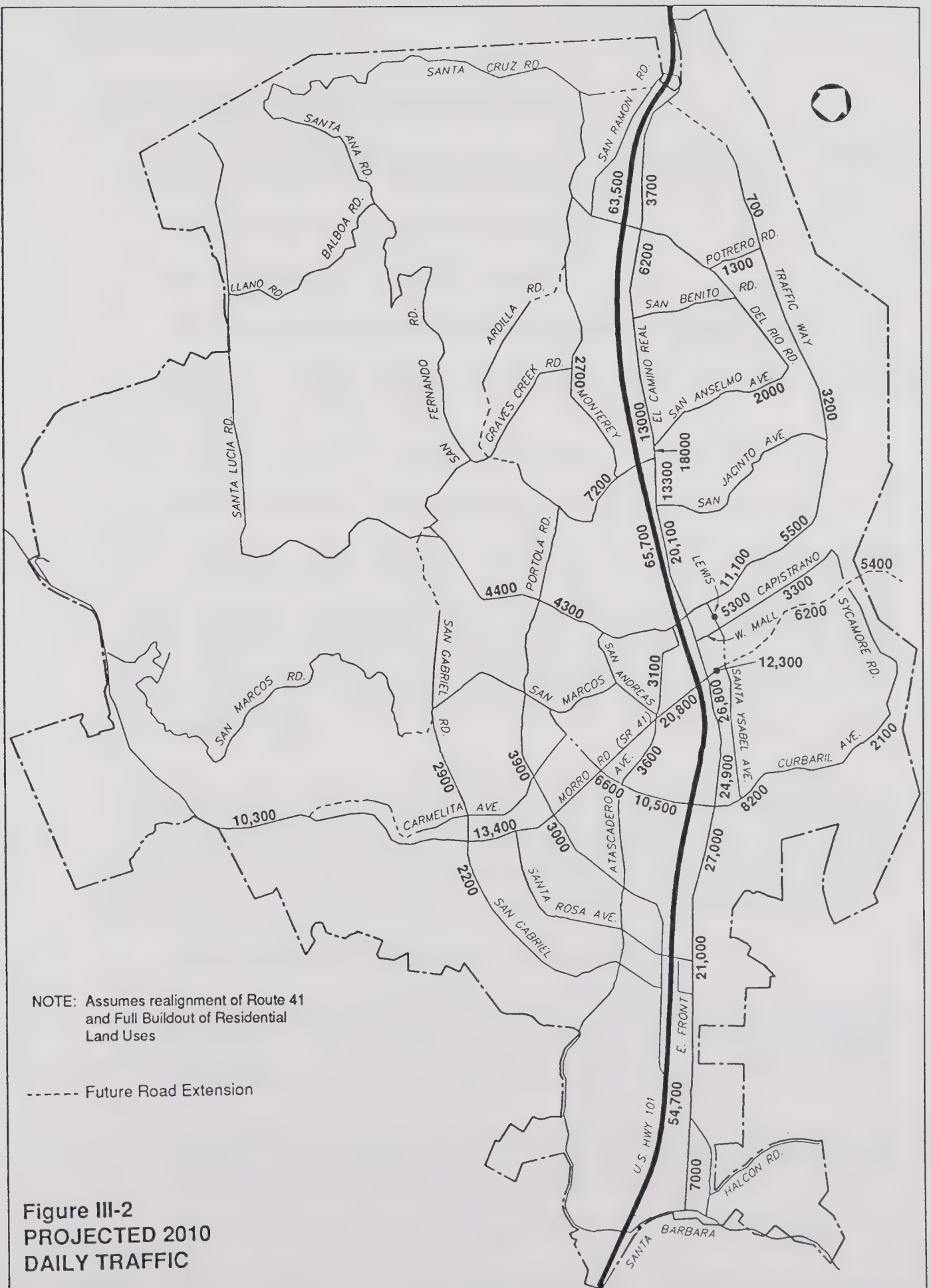
Traffic levels are projected to increase substantially in some areas of the City by 2010. Figure III-2 presents projected 2010 daily traffic volumes on various streets. These projections assume rerouting of Route 41 along the Mercedes alignment, consistent with Circulation Element policies.

d. Projected Levels of Service and Roadway Improvement Needs

In most cases, two-lane roadways would accommodate projected traffic volumes with acceptable levels of service. Exceptions include El Camino Real (requiring four travel lanes between Santa Barbara and Del Rio) and Morro Road (requiring four travel lanes between San Gabriel and El Camino Real). Some 21 of the 29 study intersections are projected to be deficient in level of service (LOS D or worse) by 2010 assuming no improvements are made to the roadway system. These potential deficiencies are mitigated by the policies of this Circulation Element.









## C. CIRCULATION POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

The Plan's circulation system has been designed to address the Circulation and Land Use goals stated in Section III.A. More specifically, the policies are intended to:

- Retain the rural character of the circulation system
- Enhance pedestrian, bicycle and traffic safety
- Facilitate and promote use of alternatives to the single occupant vehicle
- Permit all travellers to choose reasonably direct paths to destinations throughout the Atascadero Planning Area
- Minimize intrusion of through traffic onto local roadways
- Provide efficient routes for transit service, emergency and other service vehicles

The traffic projections upon which the Circulation Element assumes continuation in the future of current auto-oriented travel habits. However, even with the roadway improvements included in the Circulation Element, greater use of alternative modes such as transit, ridesharing and bicycling will be necessary to maintain acceptable peak period traffic service at some locations such as at freeway interchanges and key intersections along El Camino Real. Accordingly, the Circulation Element also contains goals and policies for promoting alternative modes to reduce peak period traffic levels from what would otherwise occur.

A variety of transportation improvements are ongoing, programmed or planned to accommodate future growth, and these are incorporated into the Circulation Element. Foremost among these is the proposed realignment of Route 41 along with construction of a new bridge over the Salinas River. This will help to reduce traffic on other City streets. Also included is the installation of a median and landscaping along El Camino Real, which will improve traffic flow and aesthetics in the City's commercial area.

### 1. CIRCULATION NETWORK AND CLASSIFICATION

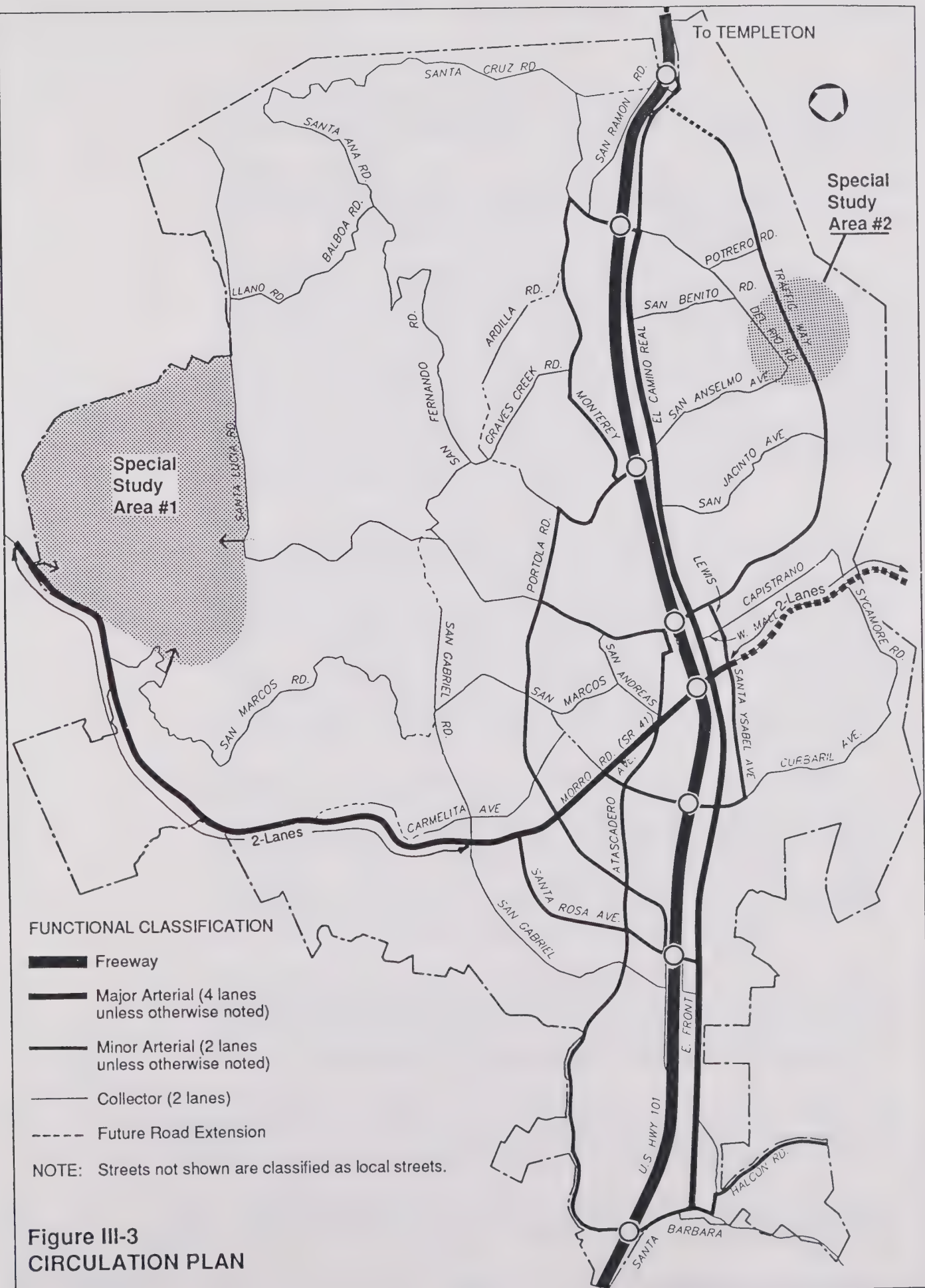
Maintenance of a balanced, safe and efficient circulation system to meet future needs of the community begins with establishment of an hierarchy of adequately sized streets. The Circulation Plan (Figure III-3) identifies the functional classification and size of key routes within the Planning Area.

The functional classification refers to the role played by a particular route within the overall system. Its function, as well as its projected traffic levels, determine the appropriate type of design and number of lanes for the route.

The City circulation network is composed of the following classifications:







**Figure III-3**  
**CIRCULATION PLAN**



- **Freeway.** These are high speed, high capacity limited access facilities serving intercity and regional travel. Only US 101 is classified as a freeway.
- **Arterials.** Arterials provide for circulation between major activity centers and residential areas in the City and beyond; they also provide access to freeways. They are further subdivided into two categories:

*Major arterials* usually carry the highest volumes and/or longest trips in the City. Major arterials are high-capacity, moderately high speed routes, typically two or four lanes wide (with up to six lanes where warranted by traffic volumes). Arterials also include regional highways. For high capacity, major arterials in urban areas should have medians between intersections and additional lanes at intersections. Service to abutting properties may be provided but should be subordinate to through-travel needs; access points should be consolidated where possible. El Camino Real and Route 41 (Morro Road) are classified as major arterials.

*Minor arterials* typically interconnect with and augment the major arterial system, and serve trips of moderate length. Minor arterials permit access to abutting properties, but traffic capacity needs are equally important. Minor arterials are typically two lanes wide and their design is similar to that of collectors except for additional space for separating bicycles from other traffic. To minimize roadway width and right-of-way, minor arterials are usually undivided (no median). Left-turn lanes should be provided at intersections and a continuous two-way left turn lane may be provided mid-block to improve traffic flow. Traffic Way is an example of a minor arterial.

- **Collectors.** Collectors have the important function of collecting traffic from residential or commercial areas and channeling it to arterials. They are typically fronted by residences, commercial or public activities. They are usually two-lane streets, and maximum acceptable volumes are often dictated by resident concerns about intrusion rather than traffic capacity considerations. Collectors are further classified as *urban*, *rural* or *hillside*, depending upon the area and type of topography and vegetation.
- **Local Streets.** Local streets have the sole function of providing access to adjoining land uses. All streets not otherwise depicted on the circulation plan are local streets. Local streets are further classified as *urban*, *rural* or *hillside*, depending upon the area and type of topography and vegetation.

The circulation plan designates two "Special Study Areas" where access and circulation need to be further defined in the future, one off Morro Road and one off Traffic Way. Applicable policies are given in Section 7 below.

Certain streets (arterial or freeway) on the Circulation Plan are designated as truck routes. These are shown separately in Figure III-4. These are intended to serve





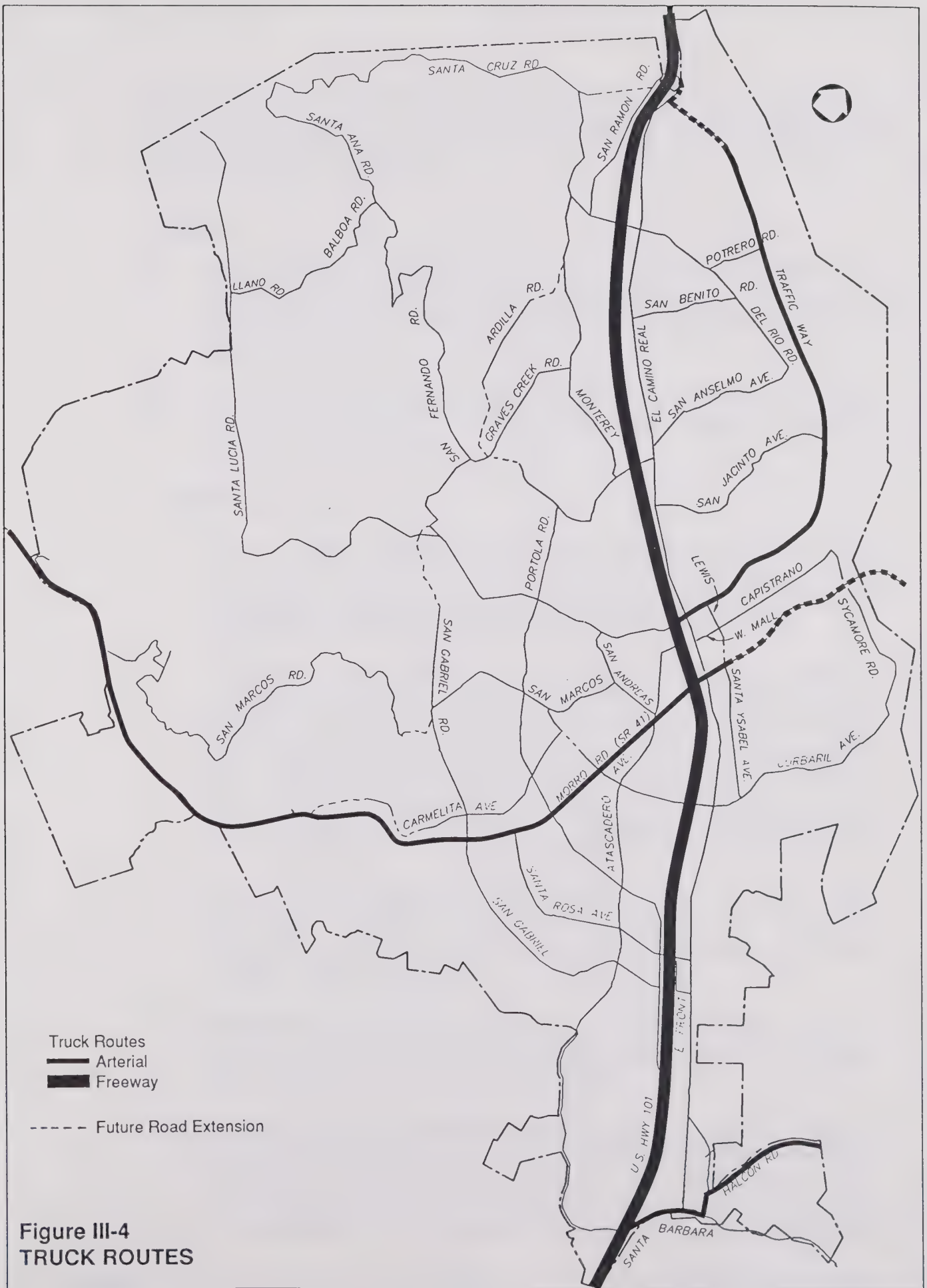


Figure III-4  
TRUCK ROUTES



trucks passing through the City or between destinations in different parts of the City. Trucks would still use other streets for access to local destinations on these streets, but non-locally destined trucks should be encouraged through signing to use only the designated truck routes.

### Policies

- (a) The Circulation Plan shall serve as a guide to identify, schedule, fund and implement roadway improvements as development occurs in the future, and as a standard against which to evaluate future development and roadway improvement plans.
- (b) Trucks shall be encouraged to utilize designated routes within the City that are designed for their use and that minimize adverse impacts on residences and other incompatible uses.

### Programs

- 1.1 Utilize a uniform system of design standards for each functional roadway classification to guide design of new roadways or major reconstruction of existing roadways (except as noted below). Figure III-5 illustrates the lane configurations and typical widths of each roadway classification.

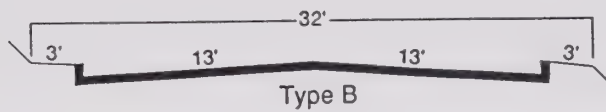
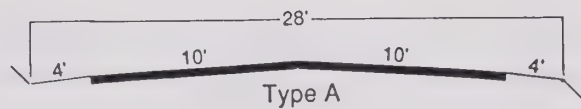
*The City's adopted Engineering Standards should be revised to reflect the functional classifications of the Circulation Plan, and to distinguish between mid-block and typical intersection lane requirements, where appropriate. These standards should apply for construction of new roadways or major improvements to existing roadways where sufficient right-of-way is available. These standards do not apply to existing rural locals and collectors not otherwise needing to be improved. Other exceptions to the standards should be kept to a minimum and should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.*

- 1.2 Schedule improvements to the circulation system in future Capital Improvement Program updates in accordance with Section D (Implementation) and applicable Circulation Element policies and programs described in following sections.
- 1.3 Update the City's existing impact fees on new development, based on expected levels of trip generation, to cover the local share of transportation capital improvement costs attributable to growth.

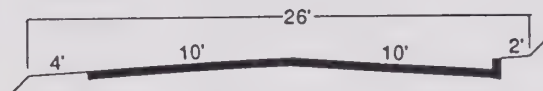
*The City's existing development impact fee rates for streets, roads and bridges will likely need to be increased to ensure that adequate local funding is generated to implement roadway projects in the Circulation Element that are attributable to growth in accordance with the Land Use Element. Rates are typically based on the amount of development (number of single family*



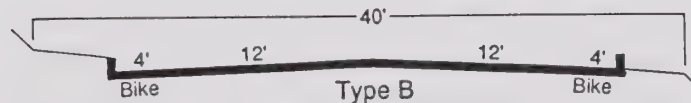
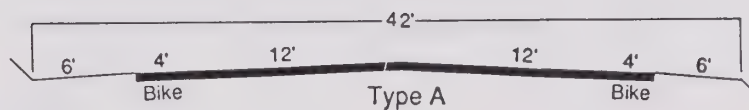
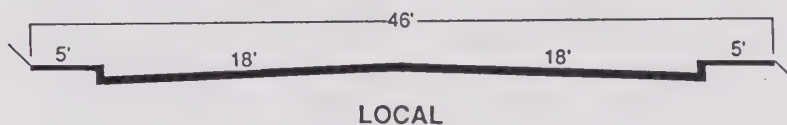




RURAL LOCAL



RURAL HILLSIDE LOCAL



RURAL COLLECTOR

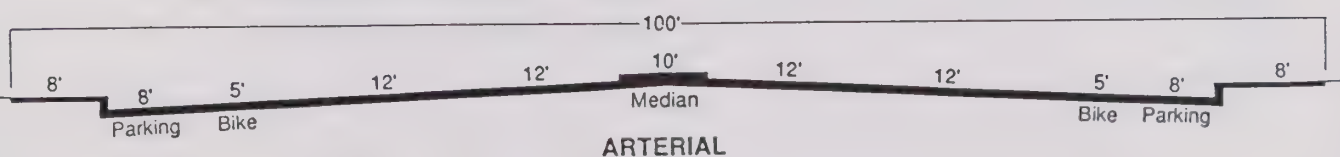
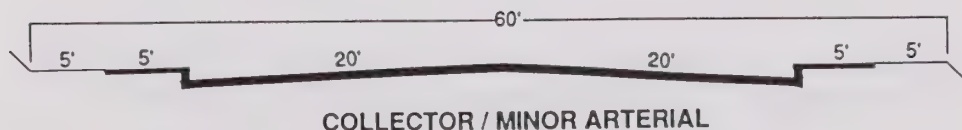
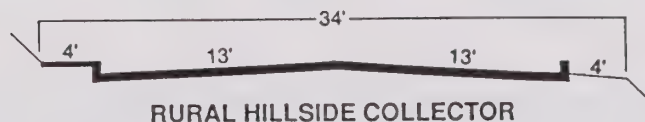


Figure III-5  
TYPICAL ROAD  
CROSS SECTIONS

NOTE: Additional pavement and right-of-way width may be needed at intersections to accommodate turn lanes.



*and multiple family housing units, and number of square feet of non-residential building area by type) and corresponding trip generation rates from the Institute of Transportation Engineers or similar sources. Rates for commercial uses may be reduced to reflect the amount of "passby" traffic typically attracted to the site without adding more traffic to the adjacent streets. Rates should be reviewed on an annual basis to reflect revisions to roadway improvement costs and availability of other funding.*

- 1.4 Provide directional signing on designated truck routes (Figure III-4), and apply appropriate design standards to accommodate trucks when improving those roadways.

*Designated truck routes include regional highways (US 101 and Route 41) and arterials with major commercial activities (e.g., El Camino Real and Traffic Way). Trucks should be discouraged from the downtown segment of El Camino Real, however. Signs should be installed to direct trucks to designated truck routes, and improvements to these routes should incorporate structural design, widths and geometrics sufficient to accommodate trucks.*

- 1.5 Coordinate Circulation Element with San Luis Obispo County's El Pomar/Estrella and Salinas River Plans.

## 2. TRAFFIC SAFETY

The following policies support the goal of enhancing safety for motor vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. A comprehensive review of existing traffic controls and signs, pavement markings and high accident locations is documented in the *Atascadero Traffic Safety Study* (Final Report, October, 1992). The programs described below are consistent with the recommendations of that study.

### Policies

- (a) Ensure that traffic controls and street signs are in accordance with the US DOT *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)* and Caltrans *Traffic Manual*.
- (b) Maintain pavement markings and stripings in compliance with Federal *MUTCD* and Caltrans *Standard Plans* and *Traffic Manual*.
- (c) Provide for ongoing identification, analysis and remedial actions for high-accident locations in the City.



## Programs

- 2.1 Install or replace regulatory and warning signs and school zone signs as shown on Figures 1 through 4 in Atascadero Traffic Safety Study Final Report.
- 2.2 Upgrade street name signs at signalized intersections for improved visibility through use of reflective or internally illuminated mast arm mounted signs.
- 2.3 Complete a study to identify safety improvements along pedestrian routes to schools and implement its recommendations, including requirements for new walkways (which may be sidewalks or unpaved paths on one or both sides of the street), school crossings, traffic control and roadway improvements.

*This study would identify suggested pedestrian routes within the influence areas of each school in Atascadero. The suggested routes should minimize uncontrolled crossings of high volume streets (arterials and collectors) and other unsafe conditions for pedestrians. For suggested routes, recommendations should be made for installing or improving walkways and for school signing, pavement markings and traffic control, particularly in the vicinity (say several blocks) of the school. The City's Trails Committee has recommended pedestrian and bicycle routes, as shown in the Bike Route Plan (Figure III-6) and Walkways Plan (Figure III-7). Those routes providing access to schools should be given highest priority for implementation. (See also Program 5.7.)*

- 2.4 Conduct curve advisory speed study and speed zone studies to ensure the proper posting of curve advisory speeds and speed limits, respectively.
- 2.5 Establish an ongoing program for preventive maintenance and replacement of signs.

*The program should include a physical inventory of all traffic control signs, a computerized record system, staff training, functional evaluation by trained staff, and establishment of priorities for corrective actions. Periodic sign inspections should occur at no less than annual intervals.*

- 2.6 Conduct a comprehensive passing-sight-distance study and mark no-passing zones on roadways with center lines.
- 2.7 Improve and standardize pavement markings, including use of no-passing stripe at intersections with center lines, striping of edgelines in some areas, use of reflective plastic pavement markings, and application of standard "Traffic Manual" or MUTCD line types and pavement markings.





- 2.8 Create and maintain an inventory map of all pavement markings by type and location, similar to Figures III-6 through III-9 in the Atascadero Traffic Safety Study Final Report.
- 2.9 Review and approve all pavement markings and striping changes or new installation before constructing street improvements.
- 2.10 Implement a comprehensive program to help locate and evaluate high accident locations within the City.

*Key immediate actions are to reinstate a color coded pin map; summarize accident data; review all personal injury and fatal accidents for possible engineering remedies; and publicize high accident locations in local media.*

*Future program expansion should include a computerized system for recording accident data; programming of remedial actions; instituting a "milepost" system for reporting accident locations; identifying locations for increased traffic surveillance by police; funding applications; and adoption of street lighting standards.*

- 2.11 Implement the low-cost site-specific traffic safety improvements recommended in the Atascadero Traffic Safety Study (See Table III-1 for locations), including identification of locations for guardrails or delineator posts.
- 2.12 Seek funding for implementation of the higher cost improvements recommended in the Atascadero Traffic Safety Study.
- 2.13 Establish a bicycle/pedestrian safety awareness program.
- 2.14 Work with community groups and homeowners to encourage use of City standards on privately maintained streets serving multiple residences.
- 2.15 Adopt standards for the installation of street lighting at all arterial and collector intersections. Such standards should allow for the use of energy efficient, low-light fixtures where feasible.

### 3. STANDARDS FOR TRAFFIC SERVICE

In a developed area, the primary circulation issues are the feasibility of improvements and the acceptable level of traffic service. There is a need to balance land use and transportation by increasing traffic capacity and, where appropriate, limiting land use intensity to maintain acceptable levels of service.

The definition of "acceptable," established by the City's standard for traffic level of service (Policy 3.a below), allows a check on how well the Land Use and Circulation Elements fit together.



**TABLE III-1**  
**SITE-SPECIFIC TRAFFIC SAFETY/OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS**

<u>Location</u>	<u>Type of Improvement</u>
El Camino Real/Virginia Plaza	Driveway modifications, parking restrictions
E. Front/Santa Rosa-Near Term	4-way stop; crosswalks (interim)
El Camino Real/Del Rio	4-way stop; flasher (interim)
El Camino Real/Pueblo	Crosswalks; turn restrictions
El Camino Real/Curbaril	Signal improvements (interim)
El Camino Real/San Anselmo	Striping for northbound right-turn-only lane
El Camino Real/San Gabriel	Parking restrictions
El Camino Real/Post Office	Pavement striping (interim)
Atascadero/High School	Restripe for two-way
El Camino Real/San Rafael	Restripe for left turns
El Camino Real/San Diego Way	Edgeline striping
Various Locations	Install guardrails and delineators

Source: *Atascadero Traffic Safety Study*, DKS Associates, 1992.

Level of service (LOS) is a qualitative measure of traffic service along a roadway or at an intersection. As described in Table III-2, it ranges from A to F, with LOS A being best and LOS F being worst. On a roadway segment, LOS A, B and C indicate conditions where traffic can move relatively freely. LOS D describes conditions where delay is more noticeable and average travel speeds are as low as 40 percent of the free flow speed. LOS E indicates significant delays and average travel speeds of one-third the free flow speed or lower; traffic volumes are generally at or close to capacity. Finally, LOS F characterizes arterial flow at very slow speeds (stop-and-go), and large delays (over a minute) with queuing at signalized intersections; in effect, the traffic demand on the roadway exceeds the roadway's capacity.

Future levels of service for the Atascadero circulation system were determined by comparing projected peak hour roadway volumes to typical capacities at key intersections on the network. These are typically the controlling locations for level of service in a developed area. The resulting volume/capacity (V/C) ratio then establishes the LOS rating based on ranges given in Table III-2. Although the traffic projections are for total daily traffic, the LOS estimates are for peak hours (typically A.M. and P.M. commute hours) since these dictate the need for roadway improvements. During other hours of the day, higher levels of service would prevail.





**TABLE III-2**  
**LEVEL OF SERVICE DESCRIPTIONS**

Service Level Category	Descriptions of Traffic Conditions	
	Intersections (Average Length of Wait) <sup>1</sup>	Arterials (Average Speed) <sup>2</sup>
<b>Free Flowing (LOS A)</b>	Most vehicles do not have to stop. On the average, each driver waits less than 5 seconds to get through intersection.	Vehicles can maneuver completely unimpeded and without restrictions on speed caused by other cars and delays at intersections.
<b>Minimal Delays (LOS B)</b>	Some vehicles have to stop, although waits are not bothersome. Average wait at intersections is 5 to 15 seconds.	Drivers feel somewhat restricted within traffic stream and slightly delayed at intersections. Average speed is about 70 percent of free flow.
<b>Acceptable Delays (LOS C)</b>	Significant number of vehicles have to stop because of steady, high traffic volumes. Still, many pass through without stopping. On the average, vehicles have to wait 15 to 25 seconds to get through intersection.	Traffic still stable, but drivers may feel restricted in their ability to change lanes. They begin to feel the tension of traffic. Delays at intersections contribute to lower average speeds -- about 50 percent of free flow.
<b>Tolerable Delays (LOS D)</b>	Many vehicles have to stop. Drivers are aware of heavier traffic. Cars may have to wait thorough more than one red light. Queues begin to form, often on more than one approach. On the average, vehicle wait is 25 to 40 seconds.	High traffic volumes and delays at intersections reduce average travel speeds to 40 percent of free flow. Drivers aware of slower pace of traffic.
<b>Significant Delays (LOS E)</b>	Cars may have to wait through more than one red light. Long queues form, sometimes on several approaches. Average waits of 40 to 60 seconds.	High traffic volume and many signalized intersections with long queues reduce average travel speed to one-third of free flow.
<b>Excessive Delays (LOS F)</b>	<i>Intersection is jammed.</i> Many cars have to wait through more than one red light, or more than 60 seconds. Traffic may back up into "up-stream" intersections. This condition often viewed as gridlock.	Travel is "stop and go" -- one-third or one-fourth of free flow. Usually caused by a "down stream" obstruction, such as lanes reduced from 4 to 3, or a stalled car, or signal preemption for a train.

1 "Average wait" is a measure of traffic conditions at intersections. It is an estimate of the average delay for all vehicles entering the intersection in a defined period of time, for example, the evening peak hour. It is expressed as a range rather than a single value. Some drivers will actually wait more or less time than indicated by the range.

2 "Average speed" is a measure of traffic conditions on arterials. "Average speed" is based on the total time it takes to travel a certain distance, including the time spent waiting at intersections. It is determined more by traffic volume and conditions at intersections, than by the legal speed limit.

Source: Based on 1985 Highway Capacity Manual.



## Policies

- (a) Maintain LOS C or better as the standard at all intersections and on all arterial and collector roads, except as noted below.

*The intersection and roadway improvements described elsewhere in this Circulation Element are designed to maintain LOS C or better at all study locations to at least 2010.*

- (b) Upon City Council approval, accept LOS D where residences are not directly impacted and improvements to meet the City's standard would be prohibitively costly or disruptive.

*Should costs and/or environmental impacts of constructing any of the improvements described in this Circulation Element be considered too great, the City might choose to accept lower levels of service during peak times of the day, as long as residences are not directly impacted. These cases should be kept to a minimum and shall require City Council approval.*

*This exception is most likely to be needed at one or more of the central US 101 freeway interchanges and their adjacent El Camino Real intersections. To maintain LOS C at the interchange ramps, widening of existing over/undercrossings and, in the case of Morro Road, ramp relocation appear necessary. These improvements are projected to maintain LOS C at the individual intersections involved, but overall traffic flow would still be adversely impacted due to tight intersection spacing and lack of queuing/weaving distance. More detailed analysis is necessary to determine the acceptability, cost and feasibility of the recommended improvements, including preparation of Project Study Reports and Project EIRs.*

## Programs

- 3.1 Design roadway improvements and evaluate development proposals based on prescribed LOS standards.

*Year 2010 traffic forecasts developed as part of Circulation Plan studies indicate that all study locations would meet the desired standards stated in Policy 3(a), assuming developments are consistent with the underlying land use forecasts. However, substantial roadway or intersection improvements would be needed at a number of locations. Most of these locations are at intersections along El Camino Real or at freeway interchange ramps. Should any of the required improvements be infeasible or unacceptable to the community, Policy 3(b) can be applied.*

- 3.2 Monitor traffic service levels and implement Circulation Element improvements prior to deterioration in levels of service below the stated standard.



*Proposals for high traffic generating developments should demonstrate that traffic improvements necessary to serve the development without violating the standard will be in place in time to accommodate trips generated by the project.*

- 3.3 If peak hour conditions at intersections or on roadways affected by a proposed development are projected at lower than LOS C, require revisions to the development proposal to ensure that peak hour LOS will not drop below LOS C at buildout. Revisions may include additional roadway improvements, mandated TDM reductions in single occupant vehicle trip share, reduction of intensity of development, or changes in use of undeveloped sites.

*Travel habits may change significantly in the next 20 years, but project reviews for compliance with the General Plan must not assume changes that may be beyond the ability of the City to implement.*

#### 4. TRAVEL DEMAND MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The term "Travel Demand Management" (TDM) refers to measures designed to reduce peak-period auto traffic. These include ways to increase use of public transit, bicycles and walking, particularly for work and school trips, flexible working hours, and ridesharing incentives. Successful TDM measures would reduce or postpone the need for capital improvements to the roadway network, particularly on commute routes such as the US 101 freeway and its interchanges. TDM also supports separate but related regional mandates of the Clean Air Plan and the Congestion Management Program, as described below:

- **San Luis Obispo County Clean Air Plan.** San Luis Obispo County is classified as a "Serious Non- Attainment Area." Rule 901 of the Clean Air Plan, which was adopted by the California Air Resources Board in August, 1992, includes a number of Transportation Control Measures to reduce emissions from motor vehicles. A key measure is an employer-based Trip Reduction Program (TRP) requiring employers to implement measures to increase their Average Vehicle Ridership (AVR). (AVR is the ratio between number of employees and number of vehicles used for commuting; the higher the AVR, the fewer the number of vehicles used.) Specific rules for the TRP will be adopted in the near future. Other Transportation Control Measures applicable to Atascadero are a school-based trip reduction program, regional public transit improvements, bicycling and bikeway enhancements, park and ride lots and traffic control improvements. Currently, the County-wide AVR is about 1.1. The goal is for an AVR of 1.5 by 1995. The County Air Pollution Control District has estimated a 10 percent reduction in the Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) if an AVR of 1.5 is achieved.





- **San Luis Obispo County Congestion Management Program.** The County is now considered an urban county and was required to prepare its first annual Congestion Management Program (CMP) in 1992. As the County Congestion Management Agency, San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) is required to prepare a travel demand management element, including a Trip Reduction Ordinance for adoption by each local jurisdiction. SLOCOG is expected to use the APCD'S Commute Alternatives Rule to meet the CMP requirements.

In light of the potential benefits of Travel Demand Management for reducing traffic congestion and postponing capital improvements and the need to comply with regional mandates, the TDM program is a necessary and important component of the Circulation Element.

#### Policies

- (a) Provide and promote use of local and regional public transit serving Atascadero.
- (b) Support the Congestion Management Program (CMP) and Clean Air Plan (CAP) for San Luis Obispo County.
- (c) Require all employers to comply with TDM program requirements of the San Luis Obispo County CMP and CAP to reduce peak period trip generation.

#### Programs

- 4.1 Upon adoption of applicable rules as a part of the Congestion Management Program and the Clean Air Plan, establish Trip Reduction Ordinance for major employers and schools in Atascadero, and promote participation by Atascadero residents in similar employer-based programs in San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles. The ordinance should incorporate a regular monitoring program to assess compliance and success.

*Employer-based programs typically include on-site promotion of carpool matching services, transit pass sales and discounts, carpool parking priority, provision of on-site bicycle storage facilities and the like. Alternative work hours programs should also be considered as a means to reduce peak hour traffic generation and resulting congestion. City employees and the Atascadero State Hospital are the primary markets for employer-based Trip Reduction Programs in Atascadero. Information on ride-sharing and public transit services should be provided at the City Hall and hospital.*

*There are few other major employers in Atascadero; therefore, the program should also target commute trips by Atascadero residents to San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles. The City can help promote use of alternative modes by*



*Atascadero by distributing ridesharing and public transit information in utility bills or other mailings, and by implementing or participating in the other TDM/transit programs below.*

- 4.2 Implement the recommendations of the *Atascadero Dial-a-Ride Transportation Development Plan Final Report* (Nelson\Nygaard, 1992) and continue to explore opportunities to improve local and regional public transportation services within Atascadero, to serve the El Camino Real commercial corridor, park-and-ride lots, City Hall and residential areas. Review transit services, needs and funding annually, and update the Transportation Development Plan each five years.

*Existing local transit service is provided by Atascadero Dial-a-Ride. The Atascadero Dial-a-Ride Transportation Development Plan recommended expansion of dial-a-ride service hours and service days, reallocating some service to match service demands, and expansion of Templeton service (with costs being shared by the County). These low-cost recommendations should be implemented.*

*Local fixed route bus services were not recommended for implementation at this time. As the City grows in the future, however, fixed route service may be warranted and feasible as a supplement to dial-a-ride service to serve commute and school trips not well served at present. Local transit service needs and alternatives, including coordination with regional service, should be reevaluated regularly, with monthly reporting of performance data, annual reviews of transit needs and funding, and updating of the Transit Development Plan each five years. An El Camino Real shuttle bus route making periodic stops to serve retail, employment and residential sites should also be considered in the future although present development levels may not support such service economically. Opportunities to improve privately operated services such as taxis and Greyhound should also be included in the review of local transit services.*

- 4.3 Establish and adopt standards for the design and location of bus stops, bus turnouts and shelters, and specifications for the design of streets that are designated as transit routes.

*Currently, fixed route transit service operates only along El Camino Real. Improvements to El Camino Real should provide for more frequent bus stop locations. Other roadways will be likely candidates for local bus service as growth occurs, particularly on the west side of the freeway. Likely candidates are Traffic Way, Curbaril, Santa Rosa, Portola Road, Atascadero Avenue and Morro Road.*

- 4.4 In conjunction with the San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority (SLORTA) and CCAT, seek to increase transit service and ridership between





Atascadero, San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles (existing Route 9), within available funding resources.

*Fixed route bus service is limited to one Central Coast Area Transit route operating between Paso Robles and San Luis Obispo, operating along El Camino Real. Potential incentives to increase ridership include bicycle and auto park and ride facilities at bus stops, fare discounts, extended service hours, additional trips, etc. Of particular importance is provision of direct service to employment or school destinations.*

- 4.5 Work with SLORTA to develop feeder bus service for Atascadero residents to a Paso Robles station upon initiation of rail passenger service along the Southern Pacific railroad corridor to the North County. When warranted, request a passenger platform and park-and-ride facility in Atascadero along with bus feeder transit services to the commute service.

*The "Rail Improvement Feasibility Study" conducted for the SLOCOG (January, 1992) evaluated options for extending rail passenger service along the Southern Pacific corridor from Santa Barbara north into San Luis Obispo County. Paso Robles is the preferred location for an intermodal facility serving North County. In the longer term, opportunities for and feasibility of a passenger loading platform and small park-and-ride facility in Atascadero should be further explored.*

- 4.6 Support the construction and improvement of park-and-ride facilities in the City of Atascadero as recommended in the *Inventory and Analysis of Park and Ride Lots in San Luis Obispo Region* (adopted July 17, 1991 by San Luis Obispo Council of Governments).

*Proposed improvements range from signs to bike lockers. Improvements to existing lots are listed as a top priority under implementation of lots. As a second priority, five additional contract lots are proposed for the Atascadero area under agreements between Caltrans and owners of existing lots: US 101 and Santa Rosa Road (Outlaws Bar & Grill), Morro Road and El Camino Real (Payless/Williams Brothers Shopping Center), US 101 and Traffic Way (St. Williams Church), Santa Barbara Road and El Camino Real (Nazarene Church), and San Anselmo Road and El Camino Real (K-Mart Shopping Center). Upon realignment of Route 41, the existing park and ride lot off Morro Road would be replaced.*

*The potential acquisition and construction of three new lots is listed as lowest priority: expansion of the US 101 and Curbaril Avenue lot down San Luis Avenue and also across the street, and the addition of a new lot at US 101 and Del Rio Road.*



4.7 Establish bikeways and related bicycle and pedestrian improvements as described in Section 5 below.

## 5. BIKEWAYS AND PEDESTRIAN PATHS

The relatively flat valley portion of Atascadero, with half the residents and almost all of its jobs, is attractive for both bicyclists and pedestrians. However, many of the streets are too narrow to safely accommodate bicycles and pedestrians, and the hilly terrain in some areas is a limiting factor as well. The City has formed a "trails committee" to develop a comprehensive plan for pedestrian, bicycle and horse trails within Atascadero. A network of bicycle routes is shown in Figure III-6 and a system of key pedestrian routes is shown in Figure III-7. These networks reflect current staff and committee recommendations. Bicycle and pedestrian amenities are also addressed in the Plan policies below. The bike route and walkways plans may be modified in the future to reflect further findings of the trails committee.

Bikeways are classified as follows:

- *Class I bikeways* are physically separated from other vehicular traffic. A Class I bikeway is proposed to be provided on the existing Salinas River bridge.
- *Class II bikeways* are separated from mainstream traffic by pavement markings. Included is the proposed El Camino Real Bikeway Project, which includes the striping of Class II bike lanes along El Camino Real between Santa Barbara Road and Del Rio Road. Other Class II bikeways are proposed along Atascadero Avenue, Portola Road, Morro Road and Traffic Way.
- *Class III Bikeways* are bike routes that are indicated with signs only.

### Policies

- (a) Establish a comprehensive network of on- and off-roadway bike routes to encourage the use of bikes for commute, recreational and other trips.
- (b) Seek assistance from major employers in providing support facilities to encourage use of bikes for commuter purposes.
- (c) Ensure safe, convenient bike access to schools and parks.
- (d) Ensure safe, pleasant and convenient pedestrian paths, sidewalks, and trails to accommodate all segments of the population, while respecting the rural character of the street system.



## Programs

- 5.1 Designate a Class II route (striped bike lanes) along the El Camino Real corridor where road cross sections permit and where establishment of a Class II route would not require removal of essential on-street parking. Designate a Class III route (signed bike route) for the remaining portions of El Camino Real. These designations should be incorporated into improvement plans for El Camino Real pursuant to Policy 6.4.

*This route is the highest priority bike route in Atascadero, as it serves the primary commercial corridor, provides access to various schools and other generators, and also serves Caltrans park-and-ride facilities.*

- 5.2 Designate a Class I route (bike path) on the existing Salinas River bridge upon completion of a new bridge for motor vehicles on the new Route 41 alignment. Connect with Class II or III bike route along Curbaril Avenue and along Capistrano/West Mall. Coordinate with San Luis Obispo County for extension of the route easterly.

*This route could become an attractive route for recreational bicycling to and from communities to the east of Atascadero and along the Salinas River.*

- 5.3 Develop a Class II route (striped bike lanes) along Santa Ysabel Avenue extending on a new bridge across Atascadero Creek to Lewis Avenue, and connect to El Camino Real bike lanes.

*This bike route would provide direct access to Atascadero Junior High, the City Hall, and to residential areas off Traffic Way. It would be an alternative to using El Camino Real for bicyclists not destined for businesses on El Camino Real itself.*

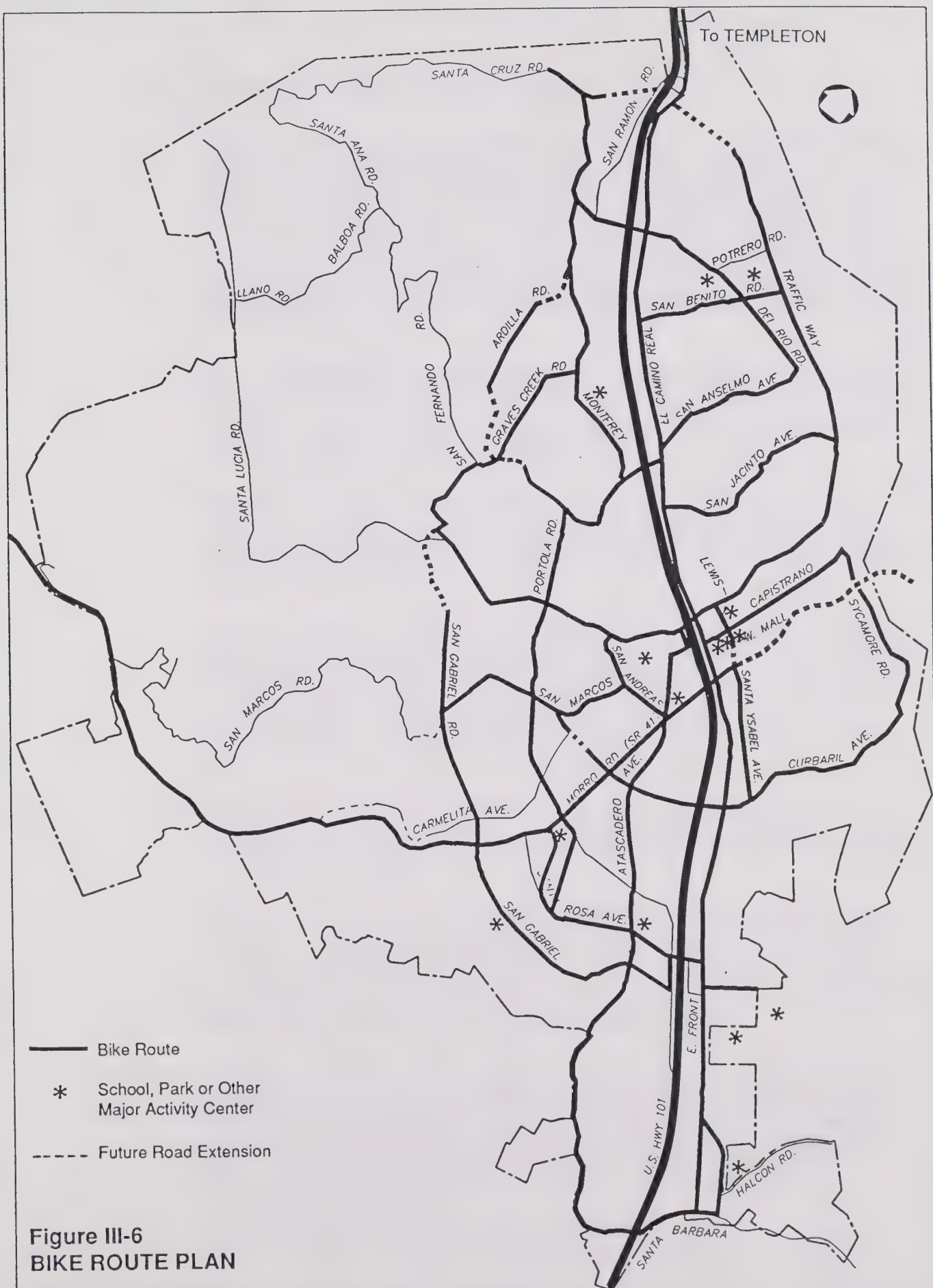
- 5.4 With input from the Parks and Recreation Trails Subcommittee, establish a program to identify, fund and implement Class II or Class III bike facilities, as appropriate, on other minor arterials and collectors so designated on the Bike Route Plan shown in Figure III-6 or as amended.

*These bike routes will serve as "feeders" to the El Camino Real and Route 41/Curbaril bike routes, and as routes to school.*

- 5.5 Work with SLOCOG, San Luis Obispo County and Templeton to develop a Class I bike route from Atascadero to Templeton.









## 5.6 Establish and adopt standards for design of bike routes.

*The roadways designated on the Bike Route Plan must be widened to provide safe riding area, free of obstacles and with sufficient visibility on curves, to accommodate bicyclists. The decision as to whether to stripe bicycle lanes (Class II) vs. signing only (Class III) is one of local preference, and is secondary to the other provisions. Narrowing of the travel lanes to 10-11 feet may be considered as a low-cost means to accommodate bikes on existing low-volume minor arterials and collectors (such as Atascadero Avenue and Monterey Road).*

*Initial implementation steps should include low-cost roadway maintenance measures to accommodate bicyclists, including shoulder paving or debris removal. Longer term actions include roadway widenings, striping, curve widening and vertical alignment improvements.*

## 5.7 Implement the Downtown Master Plan elements that are directed at improving pedestrian connections between parking, commercial and business locations, and incorporate pedestrian improvements into El Camino Real streetscape improvements.

*The high volume of traffic on El Camino Real make creation of nearby pedestrian areas difficult. Possible future improvements include better and more frequent delineation of crosswalks and the construction of a median on El Camino Real in order to de-emphasize its presence as a barrier to pedestrian traffic. These measures are being addressed as a part of the concurrent El Camino Real Conceptual Design Study.*

## 5.8 Develop a program to construct the walkways shown in Figure III-7, or as amended, and to complete a continuous system of pedestrian routes to schools and other key destinations.

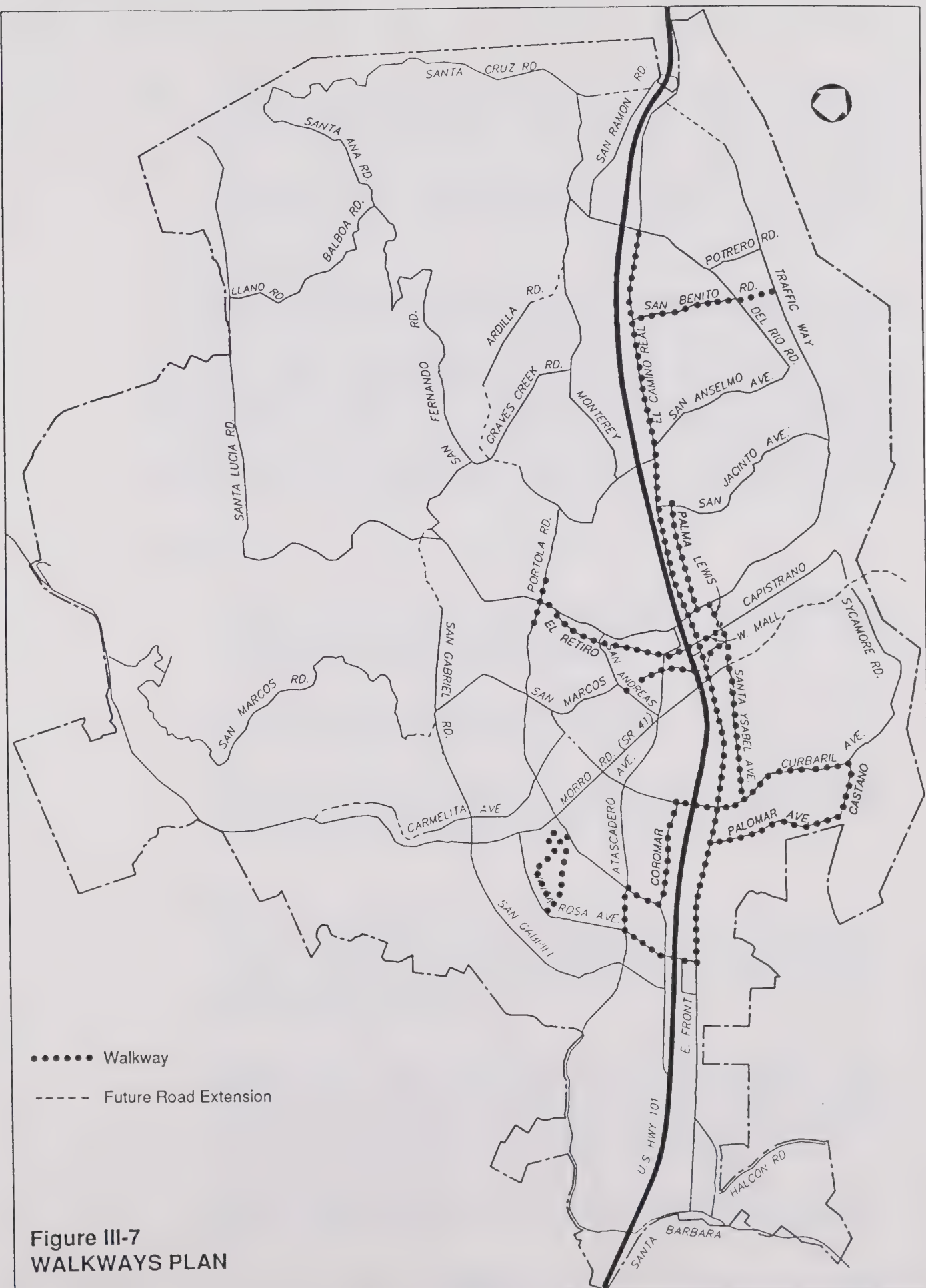
*Figure III-7 shows key walkways currently proposed by the City's Trails Committee (1992). A plan should be developed to complete this system of designated walkways. In addition, as other streets are constructed or improved in the future, provisions should be made for sidewalks or pedestrian paths in accordance with the City's Engineering Standards.*

*Walkways should be creatively designed to invite safe and pleasant use by pedestrians, and be free of obstacles, such as signs. Walkways may be sidewalks or unpaved paths on one or both sides of the street, depending on the type of street, the nature of the area, and the expected use by pedestrians. Where used, sidewalks should be protected or separated from traffic.*

*See also Policy 2.3 (Suggested Routes to School).*









- 5.9 Develop a program to remove all barriers to disabled persons on arterial and collector streets.
- 5.10 Implement bikeway improvements as a part of the 5-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for roadway improvements.

## 6. ARTERIAL ROADWAYS

The only major arterials in the Atascadero are El Camino Real and Morro Road (Route 41). Portions of both of these routes need to be improved to four lanes in the future. Minor arterials include Traffic Way, a portion of Curbaril Avenue, Atascadero Avenue, Santa Barbara Road, Halcon Road, Santa Rosa Road, West Mall/Capistrano Avenue, San Anselmo Road, Del Rio Road, Potrero Road and portions of Portola Road and Santa Lucia Avenue. These routes can accommodate future traffic as two-lane streets, but should be upgraded to the City's standard widths to safely accommodate transit vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians and turning vehicles.

### Policies

- (a) Provide adequate capacity on arterial roadways and at intervening intersections to meet LOS standards (see Section 3) and to avoid traffic diversion to local roadways or the freeway.
- (b) Locate high traffic-generating uses so that they have direct access or immediate secondary access to arterial roadways.
- (c) Support the realignment of State Route 41 as a two-lane highway along Mercedes, along with replacement of its existing bridge across the Salinas River, while minimizing its impacts on the community.

### Programs

- 6.1 Maximize the carrying capacity of arterial roadways by controlling the number of intersections and driveways, by prohibiting new access to single residential lots where feasible, and by requiring sufficient on-site parking to meet the needs of each project.

*Additional guidelines for arterial access include providing smooth ingress/egress to fronting development. This includes designing parking areas so that traffic does not stack up on the arterial roadway, combining driveways to serve small parcels, and maintaining adequate distance between driveways and intersections to permit efficient traffic merges.*

*Implementation of these guidelines is especially important along El Camino Real and on Morro Road.*



- 6.2 Work with Caltrans to ensure funding and construction by Caltrans of State Route 41 improvements as described for Alternative A-Modified in the DEIR for that project (Caltrans, 1992), including traffic signal improvements on the west end.

*Realignment of Route 41 will significantly reduce traffic on Curbaril Avenue and West Mall/Capistrano, avoiding the need for widening these existing residential streets. While accelerating the need for improving the Morro Road/US 101 interchange, realignment will postpone the need for reconstruction of the Curbaril and Traffic Way interchanges.*

- 6.3 Seek Caltrans approval and funding to widen Route 41 to four travel lanes plus median plus bicycle lanes between El Camino Real and San Gabriel Road, and to upgrade Route 41 to the west to two travel lanes, bicycle lanes, plus turn lanes and/or passing lanes.
- 6.4 Work with affected businesses and property owners to establish support and funding to improve El Camino Real between Del Rio and Santa Barbara, consistent with the El Camino Real Conceptual Design.

*The purpose of the Conceptual Design Plan is to improve the traffic flow and safety of El Camino Real for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians while also enhancing its appearance. Its key feature is a raised, landscaped median, with median openings and left/U-turn pockets at frequent intervals to facilitate access to businesses. Pedestrian crosswalks and traffic signals are also incorporated. The median will reduce the number of vehicle conflicts due to left turns into and out of the closely spaced, misaligned driveways, particularly important as traffic volumes increase in the future. The median will also provide a safe refuge for pedestrians crossing the street, and provide opportunities for attractive landscaping.*

*In the downtown section (generally between Morro Road and Rosario), on-street parking would be retained along with two travel lanes in each direction. A bike route would be signed but, due to width restrictions, bicyclists would share the curb lanes with other traffic. Landscaping features would be employed to give the section an "urban" feel and posted speeds would be 25-30 mph.*

*In the section south of Morro, a similar cross-section would be used except that striped bicycle lanes would be provided in lieu of on-street parking. This treatment would also be used in extending the concept north of Rosario in the longer term.*

- 6.5 Extend Lewis Avenue with a new bridge across Atascadero Creek to connect to Santa Ysabel Avenue and the planned Route 41 arterial. The new roadway





should provide two travel lanes, bicycle lanes and sidewalks. Extend improvements along Santa Ysabel Avenue.

*This extension will improve access and circulation in the central part of town and reduce El Camino Real traffic by providing an alternative route from the south part of Atascadero to City Hall, schools, the fire station and Traffic Way.*

- 6.6 Improve Santa Barbara Road at its intersection with El Camino Real.
- 6.7 Extend Traffic Way northerly to intersect El Camino Real near the Santa Cruz freeway interchange (two lane minor arterial and truck route with bike lanes).
- 6.8 Upgrade the existing portion of Traffic Way, including roadway widening and frontage improvements (two lanes minor arterial and truck route, with Class II bike lanes). As a higher priority interim project, narrow the travel lane and/or widen the pavement to accommodate bike lanes for access to San Benito School (see Programs 5.4, 5.5).
- 6.9 Develop a plan to improve traffic flow and safety on other minor arterials, including bicycle and pedestrian provisions where so designated, while respecting their rural residential character. Included are Monterey Road, Portola Road, Curbaril Avenue and Atascadero Avenue.
- 6.10 Implement intersection approach improvements to maintain the prescribed arterial level of service standards.

*Figure III-8 shows locations where approach improvements are projected to be needed to accommodate future land uses. Specific types of improvements are described in the Technical Report and are subject to further study.*

- 6.11 Install traffic signals when needed and warranted.

*Figure III-9 shows locations where future traffic signals are planned, as well as candidate locations for additional traffic signals. Several of these locations are on state routes, and therefore require Caltrans approval and are eligible for Caltrans funding. Traffic signals should not be installed until they meet traffic signal warrants.*

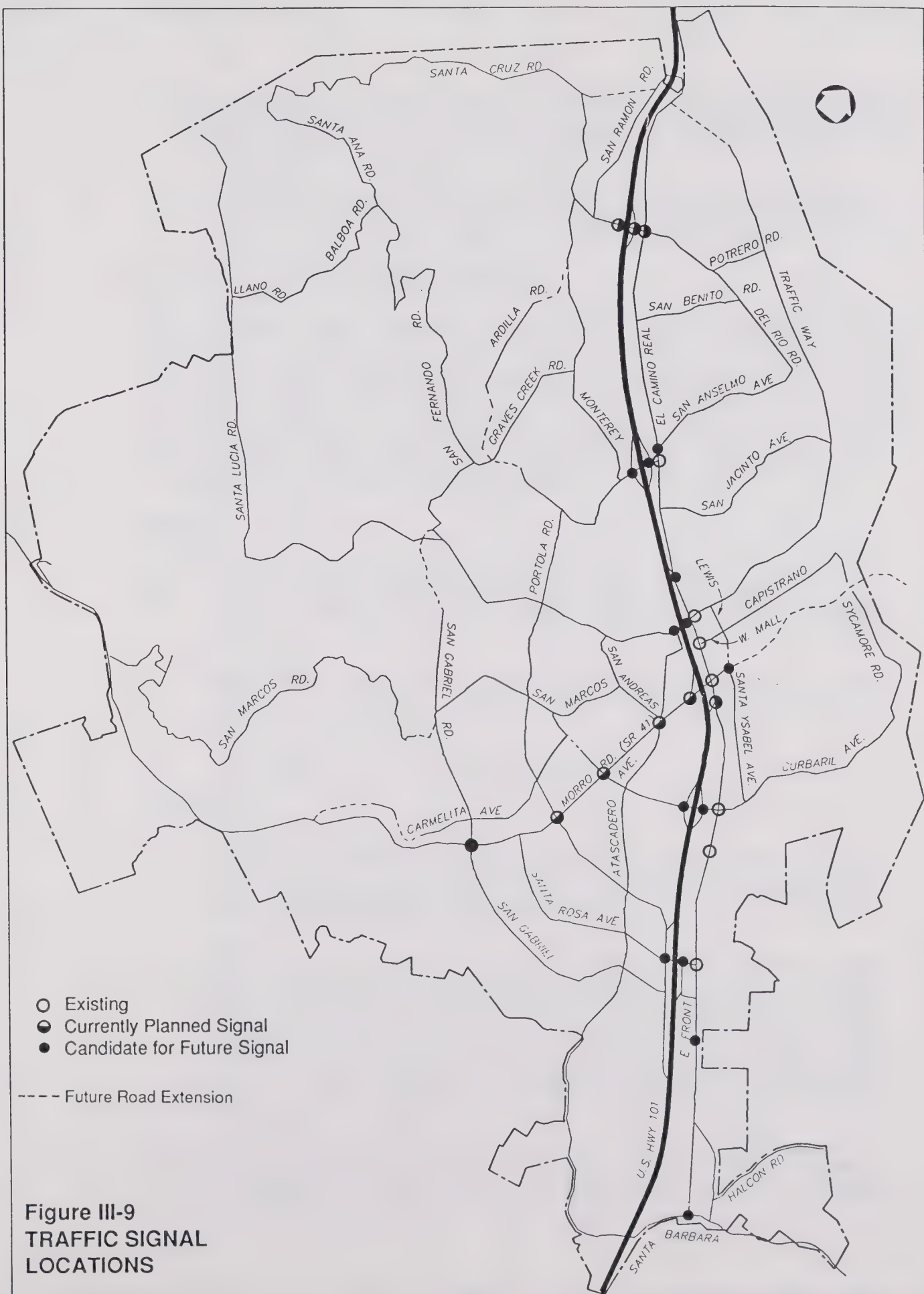
*The city should periodically review traffic signal warrants for the candidate intersections shown in Figure III-9, as well as other candidate locations identified in the future from accident experience, citizen complaints and/or traffic volume observations. When warrants are met, funding should be sought and installation programmed based on a priority ranking system.*













6.12 Implement recommendations of the 1992-93 FETSIM study addressing timing and interconnection of traffic signals, and update the study in the future to maintain prescribed speeds along arterial routes.

6.13 Establish a funding system that will enable completion of arterial roadway improvements before the projects that require them are occupied.

## 7. COLLECTOR AND LOCAL ROADWAYS

Collector routes funnel traffic from local access roadways to the arterial roadway network, and are indicated on the Circulation Plan. Local roadways are not indicated on the Plan but are the subject of Circulation Element policies. For residential collector and local roadways, traffic standards consider the maximum amount of traffic that is typically acceptable to people living along such streets. These maximum traffic volumes are much lower than the capacity of the roadway based on level of service considerations alone.

### Policies

- (a) Design collector roadways and implement traffic control measures to keep traffic on collector roadways at 3,000 vehicles per day or less, where possible.
- (b) Design local roadways to keep traffic below approximately 500 vehicles per day.
- (c) Discourage through traffic on local roadways.

### Programs

- 7.1 Implement circulation improvements to avoid adding traffic to existing roadways carrying volumes above the standards and consider traffic control measures where perceived nuisance is severe.

*Traffic above the standards may cause residents to become concerned about noise, speeding, child safety and loss of privacy. Traffic can become intrusive at levels as low as 1,000 daily vehicles. The desired maximum for a residential collector street is 3,000 daily vehicles. Where traffic levels on existing residential collectors reach or approach 3,000 daily vehicles, possible control measures to consider include stop signs, signals, channelization and barriers.*

- 7.2 Review plans for new development to ensure that existing roadways already carrying traffic volumes at or near the traffic limits are not used where reasonable alternatives exist.



*Project design should orient new residential units away from collector and local roadways that are at or near the traffic acceptability thresholds.*

- 7.3 Reconstruct the existing Graves Creek Bridge on Santa Lucia Avenue.
- 7.4 Extend Santa Cruz Road to the east across Graves Creek to San Ramon Road, following its established right-of-way.
- 7.5 Extend San Gabriel Road northwesterly to connect with Santa Lucia Avenue and Graves Creek Road within its established right-of-way.
- 7.6 Extend San Marcos Road west of San Gabriel Road within its established right-of-way.
- 7.7 Extend Carmelita Avenue within its established right-of-way to provide a continuous route from Portola Road southwest to Route 41.
- 7.8 Add a bridge across Atascadero Creek to connect Morro Road and Carmelita Avenue approximately midway between Casanova and Barranco Road.
- 7.9 Extend Ardilla Road within its established right-of-way and construct a bridge across Graves Creek to provide a continuous route from Portola Road to Monterey Road.
- 7.10 Construct a bridge on Curbaril Road across Atascadero Creek between Morro Road and Carmelita Avenue.
- 7.11 Upon development of Special Study Area #1 (see Circulation Plan), provide at least two collector roads into/out of the area. One of these roads should connect to Santa Lucia Avenue.
- 7.12 Evaluate alternative locations for a new collector street connecting Traffic Way to Del Rio Road, in the general area of Special Study Area #2 shown on the Circulation Plan.

## 8. FREEWAY AND INTERCHANGE IMPROVEMENTS

Although the Circulation Plan focuses on Atascadero roadways, conditions on US 101 freeway and its interchanges will affect and be affected by development in the Planning Area. The Atascadero Circulation Study projects that US 101 traffic will almost double from 38,000 daily vehicles (two way) in 1990 to almost 64,000 by 2010. The *Route 101 Corridor Study* by the San Luis Obispo Area Council of Governments (SLOCOG), 1988, projects that the freeway's capacity will be reached by 2001 in the Atascadero area. The Route 101 study also found deficiencies in the configurations of almost all of the existing interchanges within





Atascadero, and projected capacity problems at the three central ones (Curbaril, Route 41 and Traffic Way) by 2005 or earlier.

#### Policies

- (a) Work with Caltrans and SLOCOG to achieve traffic safety improvements and eliminate existing substandard design conditions at freeway interchanges in Atascadero.
- (b) Maintain US 101 freeway level of service at or better than the minimum level prescribed in San Luis Obispo County's Congestion Management Program.
- (c) Maintain levels of service at freeway on- and off-ramp intersections in accordance with City's LOS standards (see Section 3).
- (d) Utilize applicable Caltrans standards in the design of freeway interchange improvements and include provisions for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- (e) Ensure that new development does not adversely impact traffic safety or level of service at freeway interchanges.

#### Programs

- 8.1 Coordinate with SLOCOG and Caltrans to prepare a Project Study Report to study alternative improvement plans for the US 101/Route 41 (Morro Road) freeway interchange to meet long-range traffic needs for local and regional traffic.

*Even with traffic signal and striping improvements included in the proposed Route 41 improvement project, the need for capacity and operational improvements at this interchange is projected based on the 2010 forecasts of traffic growth. A PSR was initiated in Spring 1993 to determine the level and nature of possible interchange improvements as a first step toward seeking improvements.*

- 8.2 Monitor traffic growth and develop plans as necessary for widening freeway undercrossings/overcrossings at Santa Rosa, Curbaril, Traffic Way, San Anselmo and Del Rio to accommodate future traffic growth.

*All of these interchanges are low capacity, substandard interchanges according to the Route 101 Corridor Study. To improve safety, to accommodate projected traffic growth, and to maintain adequate circulation between the eastern and western portions of the City, the freeway crossings need to be widened from two lanes to four lanes, and traffic signals should be installed when warranted. Specific provisions need to be made for pedestrians and bicyclists. Opportunities should also be sought to spread*



*ramp and adjacent street intersections farther apart where possible. Ramp metering requirements also need to be considered.*

- 8.3 Seek public and private funding for interchange improvements as needed to remedy existing substandard configurations and to accommodate traffic growth in the Atascadero Planning Area.

*Caltrans does not currently fund local interchange improvements to accommodate planned traffic growth. However, some of the need for improvements is associated with existing design deficiencies, as described in the Route 101 Corridor Study. Alternative sources such as increased traffic impact fees, Assessment Districts and a countywide sales tax increase need to be considered as well.*

## 9. PARKING

Commercial uses are concentrated in the downtown area and along the El Camino Real corridor. The downtown also includes City administrative offices. Parking is needed for patrons and employees of these areas, and occurs both on-street and off-street. The Atascadero Downtown Master Plan (Wurster, Bernard, and Emmons, 1990) addresses downtown parking needs. In general, businesses along El Camino Real provide adequate off-street parking to meet their individual needs. Most parking in residential areas is off-street; due to the narrow width of the streets, on-street parking needs to be minimized, particularly in the rural areas.

### Policies

- (a) Ensure that there is an adequate supply of parking in commercial areas.
- (b) Where possible, consolidate parking sites along El Camino Real for more efficient use of land.
- (c) Encourage the use of off-street parking in all areas of the City in order to minimize the width of streets and to reduce conflicts with bicyclists and pedestrians.
- (d) Design public and private parking lots to minimize conflicts with street traffic.

### Programs

- 9.1 Work with property owners to develop easement agreements to improve the visibility and layout of private parking areas in the alley areas midway between Traffic Way and Entrada and between Entrada and West Mall.





- 9.2 Acquire sites on the south side of Lewis Avenue as they become available, and reserve for future parking.
- 9.3 Form a downtown parking district bounded by El Camino Real, Atascadero Creek, Lewis Avenue and property lines west of Traffic Way for the purposes of developing downtown parking areas.
- 9.4 Encourage property owners along El Camino Real to develop shared parking facilities and parking lot access driveways to make better use of available land, particularly on the south side in the central area (Curbaril to Rosario).
- 9.5 Continue to enforce the current parking standards in other areas of the City to ensure adequate off-street parking for all uses.
- 9.6 Retain on-street parking along El Camino Real in the downtown (generally between Morro Road and Rosario) where off-street parking is limited.
- 9.7 Develop and adopt parking lot design standards and review procedures to ensure safe access to and from properties and to minimize conflicts with arterial traffic.

#### 10. RAILROADS, PIPELINES AND TRANSMISSION LINES

Existing regional railroad, pipeline and electrical transmission lines pass through Atascadero as follows:

- **Southern Pacific Transportation Company (SPTC)** operates mainline rail freight service between the San Francisco Bay Area and Southern California along the Coast Line. Through Atascadero, the Coast Line runs generally north-south, parallel to and west of the Salinas River. According to the *Rail Improvement Feasibility Study* (San Luis Obispo Council of Governments, March, 1992) two through-freight trains operate daily in each direction, and this level of operation has remained stable in the recent past. Local freight train service through Atascadero has decreased to a tri-weekly local train operating between Salinas and Santa Marguerita. Amtrak also operates the Coast Starlight passenger train along the SPTC track from Los Angeles to Seattle, with one daily train in each direction and no passenger stops in Atascadero. There are no expectations for significantly increased through-freight operations in the future, although local freight levels could expand depending on the local need. The *Rail Improvement Feasibility Study* recommended improved service on the Coast Starlight run, including a new passenger station in Paso Robles, but no near term expansion of the number of trains operated.
- **Chevron USA, Inc. and Navy** oil pipelines extend from Estrero Bay through Atascadero easterly to the San Joaquin Valley. The Chevron pipeline



transports crude oil; use of the Navy pipeline has been abandoned. The two pipelines follow the same route through Atascadero, extending east-west from the Paradise Valley north of Route 41, crossing US 101 just north of Morro Road and then continuing easterly across Pine Mountain to the Salinas River. East of the Salinas River, the pipelines continue northeasterly through the El Pomar area to Shandon, generally paralleling Route 41. The nearest pumping station to Atascadero is several miles east of the Salinas River. The California Public Utilities Commission administers Federal regulations for the pipelines. There are no known plans for constructing new oil pipelines within the Atascadero area.

- **Southern California Gas Company (SCGC)** natural gas lines extend north-south and east-west from Atascadero. The north-south line follows El Camino Real and US 101, connecting southerly to San Luis Obispo and Santa Maria, and northerly to Paso Robles and beyond. The east-west line generally follows Route 41 west through Atascadero and then continues to Cayucos, and follows Route 41 east to Shandon. Natural gas is generally available throughout Atascadero through a local distribution system. The California Public Utilities Commission administers Federal regulations for the pipelines. There are no active plans for construction of new natural gas transmission lines (SLOCOG, 1992).
- **Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E)** has a 70 KV electrical transmission line that extends north-south from San Luis Obispo through Atascadero and on to Paso Robles and beyond. A substation is located near Atascadero Lake. Two transmission lines also branch out from the substation westerly to Cayucos and to Harmony. Electricity is generally available throughout Atascadero through a local distribution system of mostly overhead wires (See Public Utilities section of Land Use Element).

### Policies

- (a) Support the continued safe operation of freight and passenger rail services in Atascadero.
- (b) Ensure that hazards and spills from oil and gas lines are minimized.
- (c) Reduce the potential for hazards and negative visual impacts from electrical transmission lines.

### Programs

- 10.1 In accordance with the Land Use Element and zoning regulations, encourage compatible land uses near existing railroad and utility corridors in Atascadero.



- 10.2 Monitor accident experience at at-grade railroad crossings in Atascadero, and identify and program safety improvements if warranted and needed.

*None of the existing crossings (Halcon, Curbaril, Dolores and Ferrocarril) are currently ranked high in terms of accident potential compared to other crossings within the State (US DOT). Realignment of Route 41 will reduce vehicular traffic crossing the railroad at Curbaril, and will also eliminate use of the substandard undercrossing at Capistrano Way. However, if accidents increase at any of the locations, the need for additional signing or gate control should be evaluated.*

- 10.3 Require grading contractors to contact Underground Service Alert (U.S.A.) prior to beginning any excavation which might impact an existing underground pipeline.
- 10.4 Work with San Luis Obispo County and pipeline/transmission line owners developing long-range corridor plans in or near Atascadero.
- 10.5 Require the undergrounding of all new transmission lines, when feasible.





#### D. IMPLEMENTATION

The Circulation Element is designed to accommodate Atascadero's transportation needs to 2010 or later. The policies and programs of the Circulation Element include a number of capital improvements to be implemented over time. These are summarized in Table III-3. Figure III-10 shows the locations of those improvements. It should be noted that only major new facilities or improvements are included. Routine maintenance and upgrades and ongoing City programs are not included.

The table also indicates the general prioritization (in terms of schedule) for the projects. Highest priority should be given to projects to address existing safety deficiencies; these should be implemented as quickly as funding resources permit. A number of projects are already planned and, in some cases, funded. These are given the second highest level of priority for implementation, along with low cost improvements to improve traffic flow. Lower priority levels are given to projects that are primarily needed to accommodate future traffic growth or that require long lead times to implement. The priorities should be the basis for future Capital Improvement Programs.



**TABLE III-3**  
**SUMMARY OF CIRCULATION ELEMENT CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS**  
City of Atascadero

Map Key	Street/Location	Nature of Improvement	Priority Level	Applicable Program	Comments
A-1	El Camino/Santa Rosa	Intersection widening	III	6.10	
A-2	El Camino/Curbaril	Intersection widening	I	6.10	Existing deficiency
A-3	El Camino/Morro/101 ramps	Intersection widening; signals	II	6.2	Part of Route 41 project by Caltrans
A-4	El Camino/Traffic Way	Intersection widening	II	6.10	
A-5	El Camino/W. San Anselmo	Intersection widening	II	6.10	
A-6	El Camino/E. San Anselmo	Intersection widening	II	6.10	
A-7	El Camino/Del Rio	Intersection widening; signal	II	6.10	
A-8	Santa Barbara/El Camino Real	Intersection realignment	II	6.6, 6.10	
B-1	Atascadero Ave @ High School	Restriping	I	2.11	
B-2	El Camino Real, Santa Barbara-Del Rio	Raised landscaped median, localized channelization, signals, bikeway	III	6.4, 5.1	
B-3	Santa Ysabel	Widening; sidewalks	II	6.5	
B-4	Traffic Way	Frontage improvements	III	6.8	
B-5	Santa Lucia at Graves Creek	Bridge reconstruction	II	7.3	
B-6	Route 41--US 101 to San Gabriel	Widen to 4 lanes	III	6.3	Caltrans participation
C-1	Route 41 east of El Camino Real	New 2-lane arterial	II	6.2	Caltrans project
C-2	Lewis Ave	New bridge across Atascadero Creek	II	6.5	
C-3	Traffic Way North of Carrizo	Construct new road	II	6.7	
C-4	Santa Cruz Rd. west of San Ramon	Extend road/new bridge	III	7.4	
C-5	San Gabriel south of Santa Lucia	Extend as 2-lane collector	II	7.5	
C-6	San Marcos W./San Gabriel	Extend as 2-lane collector	III	7.6	
C-7	Carmelita Avenue N./Morro Rd.	Extend as 2-lane collector	III	7.7	
C-8	Barranco/Casanova Rd.	New bridge across Atascadero Creek	III	7.8	
C-9	Curbaril Rd. south of Carmelita	New bridge across Atascadero Creek	III	7.10	
C-10	Ardilla Rd.	Extend as 2-lane collector	III	7.9	





**TABLE III-3**  
**SUMMARY OF CIRCULATION ELEMENT CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS**  
City of Atascadero

Map Key	Street/Location	Nature of Improvement	Priority Level	Applicable Program	Comments
D-1	Santa Rosa/US 101	Widen overcrossing (4 lanes)	III	8.2	Includes 2 signals
D-2	Curbaril/US 101	Widen overcrossing (4 lanes)	III	8.2	Includes 2 signals
D-3	Morro/US 101	Widen undercrossing to 4 lanes and/or relocate ramps	III	8.1	Per ongoing Project Study Report
D-4	Traffic Way/US 101	Widen overcrossing (4 lanes)	III	8.2	Includes 2 signals
D-5	San Anselmo/US 101	Widen overcrossing (4 lanes)	III	8.2	Includes 2 signals
D-6	Del Rio/US 101	Widen overcrossing (4 lanes)	III	8.2	Includes 2 signals
	Citywide	Safety Improvement Program	I	2.1 - 2.14	Per "Atascadero Traffic Safety Study"
	Citywide	Traffic Reduction Ordinance	I	4.1	
	Citywide	Dial-a-Ride Improvements	II	4.2	
	Citywide	Regional Transit Improvements	II - III	4.4, 4.5	Participation by SLOCAT, SLORTA
	Citywide	Park-and-Ride Expansion	II - III	4.6	Participation by Caltrans, SLOCOG
	Citywide	Suggested Routes to School	I	2.3	
	El Camino Real	Class II/III Bike Route	III	5.1	SLOCOG funding
	Traffic Way, Atascadero Ave., etc.	Interim Bike Routes pending Roadway Upgrading	I - II	5.4, 5.6	Pavement widening and/or narrowing of travel lanes--prioritize per "Suggested Routes to School" studies
	Lewis/Santa Ysabel	Bike Route	II	5.3	
	Curbaril/Salinas River Bridge	Bike Route	III	5.2	
	Atascadero to Templeton	Bike Route	III	5.5	Multi-jurisdictional project
	Miscellaneous	Walkways	I - II	5.8	Prioritize per "Suggested Routes to School" studies

**Priority Levels**

- I Near term improvement (0-2 years) to resolve existing safety/operational problem.
- II Mid-term improvement (2-10 years) currently planned.
- III Long-term improvement (10-20 years) to meet needs at buildout. Might need to be accelerated depending on timing of specific development projects.

- Notes:
- 1. Includes capital projects only; city ordinances/standards not included in table.
  - 2. See Technical Report for planning level cost estimates.





### Figure III-10 ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS





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